

For some, the new federal health care and insurance reform law may have been little more than campaign fodder in Tuesday's elections. But for dozens of small bioscience companies in Maryland, the legislation meant millions of dollars in research and development grants this week.

The companies — which are working on a range of products, from cancer treatments to stem cells and blood-stopping wound technologies for soldiers —received a total of \$48.77 million under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Only companies with no more than 250 employees were eligible for small slices of the \$1 billion pie.

Grants such as this new one "allow us in general to advance our technology and explore applications of it in a manner that doesn't cost our shareholders that capital," said Douglas J. Swirsky, CFO of GenVec. The Gaithersburg company won \$244,479 to help fund its cancer treatment program.

"It's a wonderful way to evaluate the technology for applications that we may not be able to do in a capital-constrained environment," Swirsky said.

The timetable from application to notification of receiving grants was "very quick," he said. "We didn't have a lot of notice, but the administrators did a good job."

Among the other recipients was another Gaithersburg biotech, Lentigen.

"As a small company operating in a difficult economic climate, these funds are very timely and will be invested in completion of our [good manufacturing practice] manufacturing facility and the support of several of the therapeutic and vaccine programs submitted for consideration," said Tim Ravenscroft, CEO of Lentigen, in a statement.

The privately held biotech, which received \$1.24 million, is developing lentiviral vector technology for therapeutic, vaccine and production applications. Lentiviral vectors are the most

efficient vehicles for stably delivering genes or gene silencing sequences into cells, according to Lentigen information.

Another big winner was Champions Biotechnology, which won \$1.46 million. The Baltimore company is developing advanced preclinical platforms and tumor-specific data to improve cancer drugs.

MacroGenics won seven grants totaling \$1.71 million, according to federal information. The Rockville company focuses on antibody-based therapeutics for immunological, cancer, respiratory and infectious diseases.

Also winning grants were Neuralstem of Rockville and RegeneRx BioPharmaceuticals of Bethesda, which each received \$733,438, according to company statements.

Neuralstem's award contained three grants.

"This money represents a significant boost ...," said CEO Richard Garr. "It will help us move our first-in-class small molecule treatment for depression into the clinic, and advance our ongoing trial to treat [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis] with our spinal cord stem cells.

RegeneRx, whose award also contained three grants, said it had applied for the maximum, \$5 million.

"This award is extremely valuable to companies like ours as it provides significant non-dilutive capital in furtherance of our clinical development activities, a specific objective of this grant. While we are disappointed that we did not receive the full amount under our application, we understand the broad appeal of this program which led to the significant over-subscription of funds available," CEO J.J. Finkelstein said in a statement.

RegeneRx is developing a novel therapeutic peptide, thymosin beta 4, for tissue and organ

protection, repair and regeneration. It is studying its use in treating cardiovascular and central nervous system diseases; as a topical eye drop for ophthalmic indications; and for skin diseases and wounds.

STB Lifesaving Technologies of Rockville won \$244,479 to develop its wound dressing designed to reduce blood loss.

Spherix of Bethesda won \$469,479 for its program to develop treatments for high triglyceride levels.

"This award will allow us to accelerate the initiation of our triglycerides development program to late 2010 to include in vitro and animal studies leading to appropriate human trials," CEO Claire Kruger said in a statement.

A list of Maryland grant recipients is available at www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=228990,00.html

###